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DESCRIPTION OF THE Confirmed State OF A CHRISTIAN.

By the late Reverend Mr. ROBERT FLEMING, Author *of the Fulfilling of the Scriptures.*

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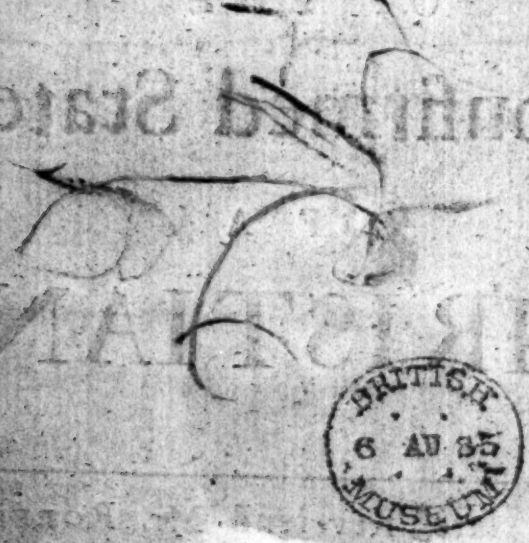
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TO THE

READER.

IT is like thou mayeſt think ſtrange, how theſe few Sheets in the Cloſe fall in here, after the foregoing Part was finiſhed; but tho' they meet in one Deſign and Intereſt, yet was not this then intended until the former was done, and if it might tend to a ſolid Uſe and Fruit unto any, I ſhall forbear a further Apology herein.

I may truly ſay, the Weight of the Subject hath carried it ſome further Length than was deſigned, when I ſo much ſought to be ſhort, as I aim at in

any Thing of this Kind, that through my Desire to avoid any unnecessary multiplying of Words, I fear lest it may make some Things seem a little dark at the first View: Tho' I hope, not upon any serious Perusal of the same. Two Things I must further crave Leave to add,

1. *That when some succinct View of the great Assistances, and Confirmations of our Faith is here offered, which these of the lowest Capacity of the Church, might with that Advantage improve, as in a few Hours, by reading it sometimes over, may be so far impressed on their Mind and Judgment, that they could give some clear and judicious Account thereof; it may be by such, but seriously weighed, and taken to Heart of what concern the Use hereof is.*

2. *That I humbly judge also, it were a most special Service for the Truth in this Day, to have some short* Directory, *and Remembrancer of the great Acts of the Lord,*

Lord, and Monuments of his Providence now under the New Teſtament, *in that Manner held forth, as might moſt tend to ſome univerſal Uſe of all within the Church. I confeſs, my Deſire preſſed me to ſome ſmall Eſſay herein, with Intent to have joined it to this Work, but having with much Conviction laid this wholly aſide, as to any further Appearance that Way, ſo is it with an earneſt Deſire, that ſome more qualified, might take to Heart, and under their Hand, ſo great a Service, both for their Generation and Poſterity. It is ſure, the Lord hath deſigned his People to be taught the Greatneſs of his Works, as well as the Precepts of his Word, and as no Duty is more preſſed than this under the Old Teſtament, both as to Publick and Family Inſtruction, ſo are we no leſs accountable in theſe laſt Times, for this Improvement, of ſuch as are of known, public, and uncontroulable Evidence, and ſhould be the Care of each Age to have*

that ſolemn Remembrance kept up here-of, ſo as not a few, but the very Multitude within the Church, might be as a public Library, and Repoſitory of the ſame.

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A DESCRIPTION OF THE Confirmed State OF A CHRISTIAN.

THO' the Measure of all Christians Establishment in the Truth be not alike, but must have Respect to their different Trials, Talents, and Improvements for this End; yet may it cause Astonishment to see, how rare any Study of this Kind is now

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to be found. When 'tis not only one of the higheſt Concerns of Chriſtianity, but in a more than ordinary Way called for, as the Work of this Day; yea, being this is a Part of Religion, which ſeems leaſt improved of any, for the more general State of Profeſſors within the Church; under ſome Conviction hereof, was this Eſſay deſigned; wherein, with humble Confidence, I may ſay, the Truth hath been ſought with that ſerious Enquiry into the Nature of theſe Things held forth, as I judged needful for ſuch, who have ſo great an Intereſt, and adventure not only through Time, but for all Eternity, to ſupport themſelves upon the alone Certainty hereof; and ere theſe Days of Trial, which we now ſee, paſs over this Generation, it may be found; this was not unſeaſonable, or without Cauſe directed to ſuch a Time, if the Lord graciouſly bleſs the ſame; nor will it, I hope, be found unneceſſary to preſent yet further, ſome clear Proſpect of a *Confirmed State in Religion*, and what thoſe ought to be, who, with Light, and Aſſurance of Mind, are like to follow the Lord fully in ſuch a Day; which is here offered in a ſevenfold Character, under which a *truly confirmed*

firmed Christian in the Truth of his Pro-fession may be stated.

CHARACTER I.

He is one, *who hath another Sense, and Impression of this great Study for attaining to a confirmed State in Religion*, and is on *higher Grounds pressed to follow the same, than most of the visible Church do apprehend*; and should be thus considered.

1. As one to whom the *Glory of the Christian Profession* is in the highest Degree dear, and who would have the World see, that such as embrace the same, and do most fully adventure on the Testimony of God in his Word, are those who walk on the highest Principles of true and enlightned Reason; yea, who take deepest to Heart, that Obligation which is on them, who desire to advance the Repute, and Honour of the Truth, to be in such Terms therewith upon its own Evidence, that they may know how to confute and shame Atheists, and Infidels, if called thereunto.

2. Who see also, that such is the State of fallen Man, as stands in need of all the

the Contributions that can be, not only to ſtrengthen the Chriſtian's Faith, to bear out againſt the ſtrong Aſſaults of Infidelity, but to gain alſo more Credit and Veneration to the Truth, with thoſe who are not eaſily dealt with, but by ſuch Means as bear ſome Congruity to their natural Light and Reaſon; for which End the Lord hath afforded his miniſterial Helps, to render the Unbelief of the World, and all Pretence of Heſitation about his Truths more inexcuſable.

3. He alſo ſees, that the moſt important and fundamental Truths of Chriſtianity, need the greateſt Confirmation in his Faith; and thoſe, who enter into a high and diſcriminating a Profeſſion from the Reſidue of the World, need to know in what Manner they embrace the ſame. He ſees, that the natural Order of Things does abſolutely require to have the Foundation ſure laid, on which ſo great a Superſtructure muſt reſt, ſo as he judges it a Work by itſelf, and to need ſome particuliar retiring his Soul in the moſt ſerious Receſs, and Compoſure thereof, to attain a Stedfaſtneſs in the Truth, and know the ſtrong and firm Conveyance of that greateſt Myſtery of the Goſpel,

ſuch a Manner, as needs not a new Miracle to confirm the ſame. But he knows, that no Sharpneſs of Mens natural Underſtanding about the Truth, can ever attain a true Reſt, and Settlement of Mind therein, without an humble and ſerious Spirit, ſtooping down before the Wiſdom of God, and entring as a little Child into his School; and by that humble Practice and Obedience of the Goſpel, there is an undoubted coming up to the greateſt Aſſurance and cleareſt Demonſtrations of the ſame, as *John* vii. 17.

4. He knows, that as nothing tends more to ſhake Mens Spirits, and ſtagger them about the Truth, than a light and tranſient View hereof, ſo does the greateſt Eſtabliſhment follow, on the neareſt approach by a deep and ſerious Enquiry about the ſame; and he clearly ſees, that if ſuch, who look but at a Diſtance on the Way of Religion, did but once come to have their Spirits exceed in a more ſerious reflection thereon, the firſt View they would have, could not but be Matter of Wonder and Amazement; to think what can ſupport a Soul, in ſo marvellous a Way, as the Life and Practice of Chriſtianity, which is ſo viſible above Nature,

ture, and that wherein they must do Violence to the same; wherein they must part with the Multitude, and oppose themselves to the strongest Tide of Example, and must endure also in Hope and believe for Things not seen, (which were never the Object of human Sense, to any in this Earth; and are oft called to part with the most desireable Things of Sense, upon the alone Credit of their Faith, yea, wherein they must enter that Profession, on no other Terms, than to be Martyrs for the same, and seal it with their Blood; so that he must need see a Christian, according to the Rule and Institution of the Gospel, to be the greatest Riddle and Wonder of any Sight within Time; but when such come more close and near upon this Trial, and have once understood the Nature and Greatness of that Security, which these have to adventure on, and what is the Glory of their Hope, and the sure Spring of their Supplies, for their Work and Trials within Time; then will this second Wonder unspeakably exceed the first; how 'tis possible, that such are not of a more raised and enlarged Spirit, in the Service of the Gospel, in that short Season they have

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here for it, on the Earth, and how their Difficulty ſhould not be more, to bear the Joy of ſo great a Proſpect and Expectation, than to bear any preſent Griefs and Troubles. Yea, how a Man's Life, who indeed ſincerely makes the Chriſtian Profeſſion, is not in ſome more continued Tranſport of Raviſhment and Wondering, to know, that they are ſurely made for their eternal State in another World, and are among thoſe, on whom the glorious God hath choſen to have the exceeding Riches of his Grace ſhewed forth, in the Regions of Bleſſedneſs above for ever.

5. He hath another Sight and Proſpect of the Chriſtian Creed, than moſt who give an eaſy Aſſent thereunto; and hath his Reaſon ſo dazled with the Revelation of the Goſpel, and of the Wonders thereof, as hath put him to ſuch an Exerciſe, as that 2 *Chron.* vi. 18. How to credit his Eyes therewith, the more deep Reflection he hath upon the ſame; but will God in very Deed dwell with Men on the Earth? He judgeth, that they, who after ſome fluctuating Suſpence, are admitted to ſee the Truth of Chriſtianity, with that Certainty of its Evidence, as the

Greatneſs of ſuch a Diſcovery does require; may have ſome Reſemblance to that Tranſport which the Angels had at the firſt Creation; when the Morning Stars ſung together, and the Sons of God ſhouted for Joy; to ſee themſelves thus, who were brought out of pure nothing, entred into that ineffable Light of ſeeing God, and alſo their own Bleſſedneſs in him, in ſo high a Degree. So that he accounts it one of the higheſt Attainments of Religion, for a Chriſtian indeed to believe the Articles of his own Faith, and have his Soul, as fully perſuaded hereof, as of his Being; that ſuch a Time aſſuredly was, and is now many Ages ſince paſt, when the glorious Redeemer of the Church, the ſecond Perſon of the Godhead, came down from Heaven, and was revealed in our Nature; that on him, as Surety to divine Juſtice in the Room of the elect Church, was the whole Guilt and Sin thereof transferred; and in this marvellous Way did the holy God take Satisfaction to himſelf, by himſelf; that thus our Nature is exalted, by the Incarnation of Chriſt above the Nature of Angels; that the Time is near, when the meaneſt afflicted Chriſtian ſhall take in no

no other Air, than the Breathings of the higher Paradiſe above, and now hath an Eternity of Joy and Bleſſedneſs before him; that, within a very little Time, he ſhall know this Welcome of our bleſſed Redeemer to his Followers here on the Earth, *Come ye bleſſed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom*, &c. When he ſhall take off the Croſs, and put on the Crown, when it ſhall be then no more a Matter of Faith, but of Senſe, to be partaker of that Inheritance with the Saints in Light; and know thoſe proper Manſions in that State of Glory, and peculiar Aſſignment thereunto, which all the Redeemed ſhall then have; and be put in the ſame Rank with the elect Angels; to be as thoſe pure Flames of Love and Joy; yea, know what it is to walk in the Streets of the *New Jeruſalem*, which are as Gold, tranſparent as Chriſtal; and what that Meeting will be of his Soul perfected, and in a triumphant State, with his glorified Body, raiſed incorruptible, and never to part any more; and to have his proper Share of that bleſſed and greateſt Solemnity, that ſhall be celebrated in Heaven; the Marriage-Supper of the Lamb, with the whole triumphant Church; and hear

that honourable Account which the great Judge will then make of theſe Trials of his Faith, and ſharp Conflicts which he had gone through within Time; with that ſolemn Teſtimony of Approbation, which will be given hereof! And, ſince 'tis ſure, theſe great Things muſt be a Part of the Chriſtian Faith; can it be ſtrange, that ſuch, as would in that Manner converſe therewith, (tho' they be not yet ſeen) as no leſs undoubted Realities than any preſent Objects of Senſe, cannot be eaſily ſatisfied with a low Degree of Evidence and Confirmation of their Judgment; but would have their Joy perfected ſo far as this State of Mortality can bear; and ſo find it eaſy to rejoice and glory in Tribulation, and to weep now for a Seaſon, who are to rejoice for ever; yea, to ſay in the Words of *Mephiboſheth*, Let them take it all, and enjoy the ſame, ſince he, who is their Life and exceeding Joy, lives and reigns, who is infinitely better to them than all theſe Things.

6. He accounts the ſtrengthning of his Faith, to be ſuch a Concern, not only as it is his Soul's Adventure for all Eternity, but as the higheſt Way of glorifying God here

here: That whatever tends to a more full Confirmation of the ſame, he reckons alſo one of the greateſt Additions to his Joy and Comfort within Time; and that theſe manifold Aſſiſtances, (with ſuch Reduplication thereof,) which the Lord hath himſelf given for this End, are ſuch, that no Fragments of ſo rich a Talent ſhould be loſt; and tho' he knows the greateſt Demonſtrations of our Faith can add nothing to the Certainty of divine Truth in itſelf; yet are they thus given, in regard of the ſtrong Trials of a Chriſtian's Life, and of what their Weakneſſes ſtand in need of for Support.

7. 'Tis in this Study, he ſees and takes to Heart, how not only the Condition of Man in the Earth, but the Profeſſion of Chriſt alſo calls for ſuch a Reckoning, that he may have Trials in that Manner diſpenſed, that no viſible Refuge will be found in the leaſt to ſtand by him, but all human Comfort and Aſſiſtance will fail him, ſo that he muſt needs lay in Ballaſt now in its Seaſon, and be founded thereon, with that Aſſurance of Judgment, as is needful for that Day, when he muſt either get through in the alone Way of believing, againſt Senſe, or periſh.

riſh. And tho' no ſuch Attainments of Light can bear out then, without preſent and immediate Influences from above, and that it is ſure, according to the Day, ſo muſt the Chriſtian's Strength be, yet does he ſee alſo the Want of an eſtabliſhed Judgment, and of ſome proper Stock laid up of Aids and Aſſiſtances this Way againſt a ſharp Storm, is like to make ſad Work among the Profeſſors of this Age, ere the Trials of ſuch a Time have done their Work.

8. He ſees alſo, how the greateſt Conteſt, which is this Day in the World, is betwixt God and Man, upon the Truth and Aſſurance of his Word; and that the higheſt Trial and Probation of a Chriſtian, in which all the Trials of his Life do ſtill meet, may be reſolved here; if they receive the Teſtimony of God, in his Word, as an abſolute Security to rely on, yea, or not. And tho' this is the peculiar Glory of the only true God, to have an abſolute Dependence of his whole Work on himſelf, and to be the alone Centre of his People's Reſt; yet may nothing be more evident, than that with moſt he bears that Name of being their Truſt; when the whole Burden and Weigh

Weight thereof lies alone upon visible Grounds; so that those Bonds and Promises, which he hath himself given unto Men, do bear no more Credit, than they have some external Surety of in the Earth, which they still look after, to stand, as it were, good and responsible for the same, which is the highest Indignity can be offered to the glorious Majesty of God.

9. He does much take to Heart this present Period of Time, wherein the fluctuating Suspence, and halting of so many under a visible Profession of the Truth, is now one of the most dismal Signs hereof; and that it seems to be the Time, wherein the Lord will, in an unusual Way, take this Generation off from any implicite Profession of the same; and when that great Roll of visible Professors in all the Reformed Churches, may be ere long in that Manner called, as each must answer to his own Name, and be put to stand to the Proof before the World; when no temporal Interest, but internal Motives, and Certainty of the Truth, upon its own Evidence, must bear one out; yea, that the most established may ere long find it not easy to be kept from staggering; and a few Days come in the Church's Way,

Way, more remarkable for Trial, than have been in ſome Ages before.

Character II.

A truly confirmed Chriſtian, may be thus alſo ſtated, as one, who is, in the *firſt Place*, moſt deeply taken up about that *rare Plot of Man's Redemption*; and to ſee theſe great, and wonderful Truths there, not ſingly, and apart, but in that Harmony, Order, and Conſent of all the Parts thereof, as they are linkt together in this marvellous Frame; ſo as to make the Whole one entire Piece. And whereof no Part does in the leaſt interfere with another. Which he finds to be one of the moſt principal Demonſtrations of this great Myſtery of the Goſpel, which the Lord hath given for confirming his People's Faith. And thus, in another Manner than formerly, can he now entertain his Soul herewith; and have his Joy unſpeakably heightened.

1. To ſet at once the ruined State of fallen Man, and what a Flood-gate of all Evil is let looſe on *Adam*'s Race, not only morally in Sin, but what is Penal in the Woe and Miſeries thereof; yea, ſuch a State

a State, where all hope of Relief is for ever cut off in the Way of Nature, or by any created Help; and where the Execution of a righteous Sentence on Men for the voluntary Violation of a Law, juſt, holy, and good, can be no Impeachment in the leaſt of the Righteouſneſs of God; but then therewith he does ſee, ſuch a Relief brought to Light, as can not only anſwer the whole Extent of this Ruin, but the Glory of God more eminently diſplayed therein, than if the Law had been obeyed, or abſolutely executed in its Penalty on the whole Race of Man. Yea, which makes this more wonderful, to ſee a higher Diſpenſation of Grace unto Man, now under the Goſpel, than was to *Adam* in his primitive State; whereby innumerable Chriſtians are made to endure and prevail over ſtronger Aſſaults, than broke him even in his Integrity; which is a Thing ſo marvellous, that the great and infinite God only could find out and effect it.

2. He does now ſee, how clear a Conſiſtence and Harmony is here, that he who had no Sin by Inheſion, but was holy, harmleſs, and undefiled, ſhould be under the greateſt Weight of Sin by Imputation;

putation; and by the exacteſt Rule of divine Juſtice, be made liable to anſwer both the whole Duty, and full Penalty of the Law; having, as Surety, betwixt the Creditor and Debitor, put himſelf in his People's Room, to anſwer the full Demands thereof, both for Debt and Duty.

3. It is here, he does ſee, that bleſt Conſent and Harmony betwixt the ſpotleſs Juſtice of God, and his marvellous Grace; ſo as his Love is to the higheſt glorified, in that marvellous Way which ſecures the full and compleat Satisfaction of his Law, and all the Rights of inviolable Juſtice.

4. Whilſt he is thus dazled with the Greatneſs of ſuch a Light, and put to enquire what ſuch a Myſtery can mean, he is then further led on to ſee, that rare Plot and Contrivance of the Covenant of Reconciliation between God and Man, here within Time; to be the very Duplicate and Counterpart of that eternal Tranſaction and Stipulation between the Father and the Son; and thus ſees whatever God hath declared, and promiſed in the former to his Church, was firſt promiſed and ſecured to our bleſſed Head in the Covenant of Redemption; wherein, as with reveren

reverend and awful Diſtance, ſo with the greateſt Evidence of Light, he is made to ſee here theſe reciprocal Obligations betwixt them, and mutual Truſt for making good the whole Terms thereof in the appointed Time.

5. He does alſo clearly ſee, that rare Order, and Harmony of Time, in theſe ſignal Periods of the Revelation of this great Myſtery of Chriſt, which from its more dark Diſcovery, and Dawning, did ſtill more gloriouſly open itſelf to the Church; by a gradual Light, and unvailing of the ſame, as the Sun in its Courſe into the perfect Day; yea, he hath his Faith unſpeakably confirmed, to ſee herewith the *Goſpel Church* being ſtill the ſame, whether of *Jews* or *Gentiles*; and how that Series and Concent hath yet never been broken off, ſince the beginning of a Church, called forth from the Reſidue of Mankind, ſet apart, as a peculiar People for the Lord; where none ever had Right and Privilege to be Members of the ſame, but by Faith in the *Meſſias*, and Profeſſion of their Obedience to his Laws.

6. It is in this Union and Harmony, he ſees all the Branches, and Parts of Goſpel Obedi-

Obedience moſt exactly meet and terminate, to advance, both the greateſt Excellency and Bleſſedneſs of Man, and aſſimilate him to the bleſſed Image of God. Yea, how all the Rules and Precepts thereof, do ſo entirely conſpire for this End, as may conſtrain the World to ſee, and admire the glorious Nature and Perfections of him, whoſe Laws theſe are, wherein he does ſo brightly ſhine forth.

7. Nor can he look ſeriouſly herein, and not ſee that ſweet Concord, as a Part of this Harmony, which is betwixt the promiſſory and mandatory Part of the Goſpel; ſo as the Chriſtian's Comfort is moſt fully eſtabliſhed, and no Duty abo-liſhed; but the very Path-road to the moſt full Enjoyments of the Promiſe and proper Way to attain Reſt and Tranquillity of Spirit, muſt be ever by taking on the Yoke of Chriſt.

8. Yea, to confirm this entire Union and Harmony more fully, he now ſees that exact and marvellous Correſpondence which is betwixt that firſt fundamental Promiſe of the *Meſſias*, and the Event betwixt all the ancient Figures and Types of the Levitical Service, and the Revelation of Chriſt himſelf, in which all the

did meet, as in their proper Centre, and now have their full End and Accompliſhment.

9. His Confirmation thus grows to ſee, that wonderful Conſent of Chriſtianity, and native Reſult hereof, to put fallen Man in a due Poſture towards God, towards his Neighbours, and towards himſelf; ſo as he may know by Faith and Adoration, how to enjoy God, and his Brother, by Love; and thus by Patience, Meekneſs and Humility, to poſſeſs his own Soul, and enjoy himſelf.

10. Yea, it is in this rare and wonderful Frame, he is made to ſee, and no Sight can be like this, that exact Correſpondence which is betwixt the Foundation and Superſtructure, how the whole Tract of the Goſpel is but one entire and compleat Means to glorify God, and reſtore fallen Man to the higheſt Bleſſedneſs. How that excellent Stream of Sanctification, does flow from that Fountain Head of an eternal Decree; which does ſtill run under the Ground, until it break up at laſt in the Heart of each Chriſtian, by the effectual Call of the Goſpel; and thus runs down through Time, until it loſe itſelf in that unconceiveable Deep of Perfection

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ſection and Glory. Thus is it, that each Chriſtian might attain ſome higher Degrees of Confirmation in his Faith, than moſt ſeem either to know, or look after, if he underſtood more how to improve this rare comparing Work of Religion, by ſetting the great Truths and Principles thereof in their Order and Dependence, ſo as each may be ſeen, in its neceſſary Coherence with other, and under its proper Aſpect.

But the more deep Reflection and Enquiry he hath herein, he is the more made to wonder, and finds this one of the great Aſſaults to his Faith; that the Revelation of Chriſt, and Redemption by his Blood, ſhould have no greater Effects this Day amongſt Men, and that the Chriſtian World is not in ſome other Manner awakened with the Glory of this Light, and preſt after a larger ſpreading and Diffuſion of this higheſt and univerſal Good to poor Mankind; yea, the more he conſiders this, it doth heighten his Amazement to think, how Mens Deſigns in the Matter of Duty and Service for the Kingdom of Chriſt, can be ſo low within Time, whoſe Deſigns and Hope

in the Cloſe thereof, are ſo high in the Matter of Enjoyment; or take ſo little to Heart, that the whole Day of the Diſpenſation of the Goſpel, amidſt the moſt diſmal Trials that may fall in therewith, is a continued Time wherein we are called to keep the Feaſt, and from one Age to another celebrate the ſame, as a perpetual Jubilee of Joy and Exultation, ſince Chriſt our Paſſover was ſacrificed for us; but, oh! how rare a Thing ſeems this to be, and how little of that Flame and Fervency of Love to our bleſſed Redeemer is now kindled on his Altar? Such as might be expected on ſuch wonderful Incitements thereto, and which once were in the Church.

CHARACTER III.

Tho' a confirmed Chriſtian, muſt be ſpecially ſtated as ſuch, one who knows the internal Part of Religion, and Sealing Work of the Holy Ghoſt on his own Soul, which is not by Words, but Things of the higheſt Truth, Subſtance and Reality; yet is he not ſatisfied to know this by ſpiritual Senſe, until he can ſee the ſame with the furtheſt Evidence of Light alſo

to his Mind; and have no leſs a clear and judicious Trial of this great Myſtery of experimental Religion, for Confirmation of his Faith, than to be ſenſibly affected with the felt Power thereof. And, in the firſt Place, why this is neceſſarily requiſite and called for, with reſpect to the confirmed State of a Chriſtian, may be thus conſidered, on ſome few Grounds.

1. That the Things of Religion, which muſt be experienced within Time, are ſuch ſublime and wonderful Myſteries, as may be juſt Matter of Aſtoniſhment, and make Men a Wonder to themſelves, to think that theſe preſent Pledges of ſo great a Hope which is to come, are no Shadows, no Appearances of Things, but moſt ſure and undoubted Realities; and that ſuch there are this Day in the Earth, who know ſo near a Converſe with an inviſible God, and the ſupernatural Truths of his Word, with the ſenſible Feeling of the ineſtimable Love of Chriſt, by this Demonſtration of Experience; yea, who in ſuch diſmal Times do aſſuredly know, what the Joy of his Preſence, and an immediate Fellowſhip with their bleſſed Head is, upon the greateſt Certainty of Trial; ſince theſe are ſo high,

high, and marvelous Things, which exceed all natural Underſtanding, as the felt Sweetneſs of their Enjoyment ſhould not more deeply take Men up, than to ſee the Truth and Sureneſs of theſe Principles, whereon they build.

2. Becauſe this Teſtimony of the Truth of experimental Religion, ſhould be underſtood, not only as 'tis of higheſt Uſe for Chriſtians perſonal Comfort and Eſtabliſhment; but with reſpect to the public Intereſt of the Church; a ſpecial Duty it is to have the Credit of this greateſt Teſtimony and Seal, demonſtrably cleared, with the furtheſt Strength of harmonious and argumentative Reaſon, for ſuch who look but at a Diſtance yet thereon; which may not only awaken them to ſome deeper Senſe and Impreſſion hereof, but conſtrain them to ſee, how no natural Science hath more clear and firm Demonſtrations, than the experimental Part of Chriſtianity, which is the very Life and Soul thereof, may have to Mens Reaſon and Judgment, tho' they never knew it within themſelves. Yea, for this End, ſhould ſuch, as have experienced the Truth and Virtue of the Goſpel, reckon themſelves as Witneſſes;

who are judicially obliged to put their Seal thereunto; and is now more called for in an Age, when no particular Truth ſeems more ſtrongly impugned, than the Reality of experimental Godlineſs is; and become as a public Theam of Deriſion; tho' Men muſt either quit the whole Revelation of the Scripture, or ſee this to be as eſſential to the Conſtitution of a Chriſtian, as vital Principles are to a living Man.

3. Yea, 'tis ſure herein, that ſuch as take Religion to Heart, muſt needs look to be put to the greateſt Trial of its Certainty and ſhould moſt nearly concern themſelves, to know if they can abide, as firmly by their ſpiritual Senſe, as by that which is natural; and do know as ſurely in themſelves the Operations and Motions of a Spiritual Life, as that they have Being by Nature; and that here be no doubtful or abſtract Notions, but which have had deep Trial and Reflection on them; that they, who dare to venture their eternal State on the known Certainty thereof, do Reaſon their Souls to a ſtedfaſt Adherence to the Truth, when they are called to ſacrifice their Lives thereto; to wit, from the rare Experiments

periments and Proofs, they have oft had of the ſame in their own Trial.

4. It doth more ſpecially call for a demonſtrative clearing of the Credit of this Teſtimony, as one of the Services of Religion, to promote the Kingdom of Chriſt amongſt Men, which ſeems leaſt improved of any, with reſpect to the general State of ſuch who are within the Church, who are ſo great Strangers to the ſame; yea, ſhould be judged one of the great Wants of this Day, when Atheiſm is now at ſo aſtoniſhing a Height, that it is not more ſtudied to have the experimental Part of Religion, (which in itſelf lies deep and hid, and is a Secret betwixt God and the Chriſtian's Soul,) with ſuch Clearneſs, and by that Manner of Evidence demonſtrated to the World, as might tend to beget ſome more awful Senſe and Conviction hereof, when ſuch clear and unanſwerable Grounds might be improved for this End, on thoſe who look thereon, as ſome ſtrange and dark Riddle, ſo as they could no more deny, or withſtand the Evidences hereof, than that they have a living Soul which yet they never ſaw; or could ever be the Object of human Senſe. And, how ſad a Proſ-

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pect ſhould this give of the greateſt Part of the Chriſtian World, who not only know nothing of the true Glory and ſpiritual Powers of Chriſtianity, but have not the very Notion, or any Senſe of the Reality of ſuch a Thing?

But, in the *ſecond Place*, it is thus, that each Chriſtian, for being ſolidly confirmed in the Way of Religion, may as clearly ſee, as he does ſenſibly feel, the Truth of his own Experience, and have his Faith as fully eſtabliſhed by this inward and great Demonſtration of the Things of God, as his Affections are quickened, upon ſuch ſtrong and demonſtrative Grounds of the Certainty hereof, as theſe are,

1. By conſidering his preſent and former State; that not in a Dream, but in the moſt deep and ſerious Compoſure of Spirit, he knows that once he was blind, and wholly eſtranged from this Myſtery of Chriſtian Experience, which now he does ſee; and once had the ſame Sentiment hereof with ſuch who do never at all reflect on the ſame; but no ſooner did the Truth, and Power of Religion ſeize on his Soul, than he found himſelf entred into a new World, to know the

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Dawnings of this marvelous Light, and what belongs to theſe Enjoyments, and vital Acts of Chriſtianity, that have not the leaſt Dependence on any natural Cauſe.

2. By conſidering the marvelous Superſtructure of experimental Religion, which from the inward Obſervation of Chriſtians in all Ages, is ſuch as the World could not almoſt contain the Books that might be written hereof; which yet is ſo entirely founded on one and the ſame Foundation, and does in all the Lines of this great Circumference, ſtill meet in the ſame Centre; yea, thus how entire and harmonious a Thing Religion, in all the Parts thereof is within upon the Soul, as well as without; ſo as every Step in this Way of the Experience of the Saints is no groping in the Dark, but what is by Line and by Rule, with as ſure and demonſtrable a Connection with the external Teſtimony of the Word, as there is in Nature, betwixt the Cauſe and the Effect; which affords a more wonderful Aſſiſtance to his Faith, than the greateſt external Miracles could ever do; and tho' the Spirit of God, does ſometimes, in an extraordinary Manner, reveal himſelf to

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Men, (as acts of his Sovereign Prerogative, which make no Rule,) yet with the eſtabliſhed Conſtitutions of his Word, does the continued Experience of the Saints moſt harmoniouſly ever correſpond.

3. By conſidering thus alſo the Being and Reality of Grace, not in its Effects only, but in its proper Cauſe and Original, and how the Truth of Holineſs in the Life of a Chriſtian, is ſo expreſs a Tranſcript of the Goſpel, in its external Revelation; that the Impreſs doth not more clearly anſwer the Seal on the Wax, than it doth beget the ſame Form and Image of itſelf in ſuch as believe; yea alſo, that Conformity it bears to the ever-bleſſed Archetype, as well as to the revealed Rule; and, how bright a Diſcovery is this of ſo glorious a Being and Nature, to which 'tis conformed? Who is the alone Pattern and Example of all Truth and Holineſs; which is ſo great a Diſcovery, as he is made to wonder, that Men, in this Age, are ſo much awakened to find out the true Phænomena of Nature, (tho' in its own Room a moſt choice Study, and ſpecially deſireable, and will be as in a Tranſport, upon ſome ra

rare natural Experiment, as made one in that Manner, cry out, *I have found it, I have found it*; whilſt here is another Kind of Demonſtration, and of more tranſcendent Intereſt than all theſe could ever amount to, on which the Eyes of moſt are this Day ſhut.

4. By conſidering that unchangeable Congruity, which is betwixt the Nature of theſe Things enjoined in the whole Inſtitutions of the Goſpel, and Mens being made happy thereby, now in their preſent State; and how great a temporal Revenue of the Fruits of Religion, as inward Confidence, Peace, and Serenity of Mind, doth as natively follow the Life and Practice hereof, as the Fruit of a Tree anſwers to its Kind, and is ever found the alone true Relief of Mankind, againſt all the Griefs and Bitterneſs of Time; yea, that 'tis no Diſtance of Place, but of Mens Spirit by Impurity and Corruption, that makes ſo ſad a Diſtance betwixt God and Man here in the Earth.

5. He is thus further confirmed upon this great Teſtimony of experimental Religion, by conſidering that 'tis ſure ſuch as do bear this Witneſs are known,

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1. To be ſuch, who are of the moſt diſcerning and judicious in the Things of Reaſon, as well as any elſe. 2. Whoſe Walk and Practice uſe to have the greateſt Authority over Mens Conſciences with whom they converſe. 3. Who are found moſt intenſly taken up in the retired Work and Duties of Religion; that can have no Reſpect to the Witneſs and Obſervation of others. 4. Who ſeek no implicit Credit from any herein; but do pray Men to come, and ſee, and prove the ſame in their own Experience; with an Appeal to the moſt exact Inquiry, and rational Trial of all Mankind, if here be any caſual Thing; and if that Teſtimony of the doctrinal and experimental Part of Religion, be not ſtill one and the ſame. 5. Who alſo out of the moſt remote Places of the Earth, and otherwiſe Strangers amongſt themſelves, do yet moſt harmoniouſly meet in the ſame Witneſs, and are thus mutually diſcloſed to each other, by a near and feeling Intercourſe of their Souls, from ſuch an Oneneſs in a ſpiritual State, and thoſe ſpecifick Properties of a ſpiritual and new Nature, with as diſcernible Evidence, as if one Man ſhould meet with another of the

the ſame Kind, in ſuch a Place of the Earth, which were only inhabited with Beaſts.

6. By conſidering alſo, with a deep and ſerious Reflection hereon, that ſure and known Conjunction, which is betwixt the moſt rare Experiences of a Chriſtian's Life, and the moſt ſearching Trials thereof, with that uniform Conſent that hath in all Ages of the Church been, in ſuch marvelous Things, as theſe.

1. What ſolemn Tokens and Teſtimonies of the Love of God, and his Acceptance, are found uſually to meet his People in the Entry of ſome great Trial or Service for him; even in ſome unuſual Manner then, in the Senſe whereof, as it was with *Elijah*, they have been made to go many Days after in a Wilderneſs-State; yea, how this does not reſpect Perſons only, but Churches; that the Word ſtill uſeth to go before with ſome remarkable confirming Work, to ſecure the Heart before the Croſs, and ſome ſpecial Trial of Perſecution comes. 2. That, as each Day hath its proper Burden and Work, ſo hath it its proper Allowance provided for the ſame; which ſhould be no leſs ſought after by a Chriſtian, than

his daily Bread, and when the Preſſure of ſuch a Day grows to ſome more ſingular Height; ſo alſo ſhould the Exprience hereof be in Faith ſought for and expected. 3. How the choiceſt Mercies are reſerved to the ſaddeſt Times of a Chriſtian's Lot; and moſt uſually croſs to their own Choice, and they have had the greateſt Struglings with thoſe Methods of Providence, which in the Iſſue tended moſt to their Advancement. 4. Yea, how the Returnings of a long deferred Hope, after much humble waiting have been to them, as a Piſgah, whence they have not only had a clear and comforting Proſpect of their by-paſt Trials, but have been more fully confirmed for the Time to come; and can bear now that Teſtimony, that the Lord hath cleared all paſt Things to them, and hath taken the Vail off his Work, which for long had been as a dark and ſtrange Riddle.

7. This likewiſe gives a moſt clear and confirming Proſpect of that great Seal of Experience, when he can now ſee, both in his own Caſe, and of others, what the Iſſue of believing in a ſingular Exigency and Trial, and upon ſome ſpecial Act of Truſt and Adventure herein, does at laſt come

come to; which, the more deeply 'tis conſidered, he finds one of the moſt peculiar Aſſiſtances to his Faith; and one of the greateſt Attainments of experimental Religion within Time; when he can thus ſee the ſame Way of believing, in ſome ſtrong and extraordinary Aſſaults, which he hath found to cruſh and break him herein; which hath carried ſo many thorough in their ſaddeſt Trials; bring him alſo in his Turn, to be an Inſtance in the ſame Kind, to bear an honourable Teſtimony, to this ſure and excellent Way of believing before the World, that none may fear after him to hold by the Promiſe of God, and venture on that Security, tho' it then ſeem againſt Hope, whoſe Diſpenſations, did yet never give his Word the Lye.

CHARACTER IV.

He is a truly confirmed Chriſtian, who in a diſmal Time, is not ſtaggered in his Faith from the preſent Signs and Appearances thereof, but hath his Soul ballaſted with ſuch ſolid Grounds of Confirmation againſt the ſame, that thoſe Providences, whereat others do moſt ſtumble,

tend to his further ſtrengthning in the Way of the Lord, when he does now clearly ſee,

1. How Tribulation, and the Croſs, make one of the moſt illuſtrious and beautiful Parts of the whole Frame of Providence about the Church, and in the Lot of each Chriſtian; ſo, as there can be no poſſible ſtumbling to any for Want of Light here, that ſore Trials and Diſtreſſes ſhould moſt remarkably follow thoſe in the Journey, who have an eternal Bleſſedneſs before them in the cloſe hereof; when ſo great a Part of the Scripture is directed, not only for Comfort, but for clear Conduct of the Chriſtian's Faith, through all the Intricacies and Labyrinths of ſuch a Diſpenſation. He ſees how highly congruous it is to the infinite Wiſdom of God, that ſo ſtrait and narrow a Way, in ſuch a State of Trial as is here, ſhould go before the State of everlaſting Enjoyment; that there ſhould be ſuch a Stage and Theatre alſo, whereon the paſſive Graces of the Spirit, may not only be exerciſed, but diſplayed in their true Luſtre, and Glory before Angels, and Men. Yea, that thus the Redeemed

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of the Lord ſhould be firſt trained in ſo ſharp a Warfare, as may not only put a due Value, and Reſpect on the Greatneſs of that Triumph, and Reward which is to come, but be Matter of ineffable Joy and Exultation, that ever they were admitted thus to evidence their Love and Adherence to their bleſſed Head, and his Truth here on the Earth; and accounted worthy to be put on ſome hotter Service, and to peculiar Trials and Conflicts, this Way beyond others, for ſome Example and Encouragement to the Church in their Day; and here alſo, he can now ſee, how the greateſt Enjoyments of Comfort, are more owing to the moſt ſharp and afflicting Trials of their Life, than to the greateſt external Calm; and that to endure patiently, and ſuffer for the Name of CHRIST, is ſuch a Privilege, as the elect Angels have not been admitted to. Yea, that the Lord's chaſtning Work, and ſoreſt ſmiting of his own, is an Act alſo of ſaving; ſo that thus, the more deeply he ſearcheth here, the more does he ſee, admire, and conſent to that glorious Piece of the Adminiſtration of Providence about the Church; and finds it to

be one of the greateſt Confirmations of his Faith within Time.

1. He does now clearly ſee, how the Truth and Faithfulneſs of God is commenſurate to his whole Work of Providence; and that all the Lines hereof, as they do lead from his revealed Counſel in the Scripture, (which is the adequate B Sign of his eternal Counſel and Decrees,) ſo do they return thither again, to make this great Demonſtration clear; that if a full Hiſtory were written of this World, and what hath been conſpicuous thorough the whole Series of Times paſt in all theſe Conjunctions of inferior Cauſes, (whether neceſſary, free, or contingent, and of ſuch Events that ſeem moſt caſual,) it ſhould be nothing elſe but an exact Tranſcript and Hiſtory of the Bible, to bear this witneſs, that the World is nothing, but God ſet forth in his own Scripture Light. But tho' a full Diſcovery hereof be not attainable within Time, yet is it a ſad and deplorable Want, that the great Acts of the Lord, in each Age of the Church, are not more ſearched and ſought out of all them that take Pleaſure therein, that they may be ſeen, obſerved, and admired, by that Part of the Creation

Creation, Angels, and Men, who are only in a Capacity to know the ſame. Which is a Service for the Lord, wherein his Praiſe and declarative Glory is ſo highly concerned, that a Chriſtian ſhould account the meaneſt Room herein, one of the moſt deſireable Attainments within Time. Yea, it ſeems juſt Matter of Regret alſo, that this comes not under a more public Care and Notice of particular Churches, and of the Chriſtian Magiſtrate (where Religion hath any true Regard,) to have ſuch ſolemn Providences as occur in that Time and Place, which may be called moſt inſtructive Providences to the Church, (and of a further Reach and Extent than any private Uſe,) both ſearched after and recorded; as becomes ſo high a Service to the Chriſtian Cauſe, and one of the higheſt Concerns of Poſterity, in order to have them not only poſſeſſed of a pure Religion, but of that Seal alſo, which the Lord hath in the great Acts of Providence appended thereto. And thus to have that Increaſe, which each ſucceſſive Age brings therewith to the public Stock of the Church, looked after, as a Piece of the greateſt Truſt repoſed thereon; ſo that the Children

dren riſe not up and ſay, we have not heard, nor have our Fathers faithfully communicated to us, the wondrous Works which the Lord hath wrought in their Time.

3. He is thus alſo taught to ſee the demonſtrative Cauſes of the moſt ſtrange Judgments on the Church, to be as clear in the Scripture, as they are in the Event. And tho' the holy God, in the Day of his Patience and Long-ſuffering, is not alike quick in the Execution of the Sentences of his Word; yet, does he ever eſtabliſh the Authority of his Laws, by the Works of his Providence, in the moſt opportune Seaſon, and as Judgment deferred is no Acquittance, ſo does it more threaten its being the greater, when it comes, than a quick and preſent Diſpatch; yea, tho' this Tempeſt, which now blows on the Churches of Chriſt, come to a greater Height, and the Darkneſs be ſuch, as no Moon, or Stars, may for many Days yet appear of any viſible Signs of Hope; yet is his Soul thus at Reſt, whilſt he can ſee the Credit of the Truth cleared, on which he hath more in Truſt than any Adventure within Time; and doth rejoice, whatever miſcarrying

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there may be of inferior Ends, that this great, and ultimate End of the Works of God is ſecured herein; and the Glory of his Truth doth ſhine forth in the moſt ſtrange and amazing Acts of his Providence, whereat many are ready to ſtagger, when they do not wiſely conſider the ſame.

4. He ſees now likewiſe, ſo high a Value which the Lord puts on the Trial of his People's Faith, and that the great Diſpenſation whereby he deals with Men, is by Truſt, and on the Credit of his Word, as it adds further to his Confirmation, to ſee all human and viſible Refuges oft taken out of his Church's Sight. Yea, his greateſt Works in the Earth, make the greateſt Delay ere they be brought forth, and his Church's Caſe is put ſo far beyond Help before a Cure, as the firſt quickning of her cruſhed, and almoſt dead Hope, muſt be at the Mouth of the Grave; and he is thus herein more ſingularly ſtrengthned, that when the Lord ſpeaks the ſame in the Way of Providence, which he hath ſpoke in his Word, (not by Might nor by Power,) that he doth with unſpeakable Advantage, ſupply and fill the Room thereof by

by the next Word, (but by my Spirit, ſaith the Lord.) Which in this Day ſhould with a full Aſſurance of Faith be both ſought and looked after.

5. It is in this rare Study, he attains alſo the greateſt Confirmation to his Faith, that could poſſibly be deſired within Time: to ſee now when 'tis ſo near the Cloſe thereof, and after all the Revolutions of Times paſt, how the Truth and Faithfulneſs of God, hath, as the Sun in its Strength, ſtill kept its Way ſtraight and fixt amidſt all thoſe dark Clouds, which have been to darken the ſame, and is now gone its Courſe, until it draws near to the full and perfect Day; yea, thus to ſee how ſignally this preſent Age is held upon that ſame Appeal, and ſolemn Teſtimony, which *Joſhua* gave, *Joſhua* xxiii. 14. *That not one Thing hath failed of all the good Things which the Lord your God ſpake concerning you, all are come to paſs to you, and not one Thing hath failed thereof;* and *Solomon* did bear alſo at the Dedication of the Temple, 1 *Kings* viii. 56. *Bleſſed be the Lord, that hath given Reſt unto his People* Iſrael, *according to all that he promiſed, there hath not failed*

failed one Word of all his good Promiſe, which he promiſed by the Hand of Moſes *his Servant;* ſo is this now, that great Teſtimony of the latter Days, and the higheſt Tribute of Praiſe to the Glory of God in his Truth, which can be given by Men, that this preſent Generation ſtands accountable to make the ſame; yea, much greater Appeal to the World, if they can inſtance one Promiſe or Predi-ction of that ſacred Record of the Scripture, which hath ever failed or fallen to the Ground, but may be read this Day in the Event, and under thoſe proper Circumſtances wherein it was to take Place in its proper Seaſon, as evidently as it was foretold. And muſt ſtill bear the ſame Witneſs, *Pſal.* xviii. 30. *That the Way of the Lord is perfect, and his Word tried* on all the *Adventurers of Faith and Trials*, which to this Moment of Time have been made hereof, and of his being ſtill a Buckler to ſuch as truſt in him, and are called to ſend this glorious Teſtimony to the ſucceeding Ages, that it may never ceaſe to ſhine or want a pu-blic Witneſs thereto, before Angels and Men, until the whole Myſtery of God in his Word be finiſhed, in that magni-

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ficent Cloſe, which ſhall be thereof at at the ſecond coming of the Lord.

Character V.

A confirmed Chriſtian, in this Day, ſhould be thus alſo ſtated, as one, who hath not only attained a ſolid Reſt and Settlement of Mind, upon the Certainty of the Chriſtian Faith, but does know the pure genuine Truth of Chriſtianity, amidſt ſuch high Oppoſitions betwixt the *Romiſh* and *Reformed Church* herein.

And, in the *firſt* Place, hath in this Manner held himſelf upon ſuch a Trial; 1. As one, who knows there is but one true and ſaving Religion in the Earth, to which God hath annexed the Promiſe of eternal Life, which can never be divided againſt itſelf. 2. Who knows, that within a little while, his Religion will be tried in the Truth thereof at the Tribunal of Chriſt; where every Man muſt give Account of himſelf unto God. 3. Who ſees there can be no poſſible Indifference in the exterior Profeſſion of either Way, but that ſo high a Contrariety of Principles is in this Oppoſition, that if the Doctrine of Chriſt be on the one Hand, it is ſure, *Antichriſtia-*

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niſm muſt be on the other Hand. 4. Yea, who hath in that abſtract Manner ſought to ſtate the Caſe herein with his own Soul, as if he were juſt come out of *Paganiſm*, to give a ſerious Aſſent to the Divinity of the Scripture, and were now preſſed to join in with that Profeſſion of the Chriſtian Faith, which is moſt exactly conform to the ſame, in the genuine and perſpicuous Senſe thereof.

In the *ſecond* Place, he hath ſought to know, how he could embrace the *Popiſh Creed*, and adventure his eternal State thereon; or, how he could extinguiſh his Reaſon and Conſcience, ſo far as to believe, that the holy God would ever impoſe ſuch a Faith upon Men as this is. 1. Where he muſt abandon theſe Principles of natural Reaſon, in the moſt neceſſary Uſe thereof, which God hath himſelf planted in Man's Soul: ſo as not to truſt his own Eyes, but others, in that great Intereſt of his eternal State; and with his own Conſent be ſhut out from all proper Knowledge of the Rule of his Religion; yea, account a blind and unlimited Obedience to Men, amongſt the higheſt Excellencies of Faith. 2. Where he muſt at once believe the Fulneſs and

Perfection of the Scripture; which is not only fitted for that great End of bringing Mankind to God, but for ſuch an univerſal Uſe herein, as to make the Simple wiſe, and cauſe the Poor to receive the Goſpel; and yet believe alſo, that it is a Maſs of dead and unſenſed Characters, until the *Romiſh Clergy* put a jùſt Senſe thereon, tho' its Senſe and Meaning is the very Soul thereof. Yea, thus paſs from the Letter of the ſame, and all Certainty of its Truth, from intrinſick Evidences, and theſe Marks and Characters of its Divinity, whereby the Chriſtian Cauſe could be maintained againſt *Pagans*. 3. Where he muſt believe alſo, that theſe are the Words of Chriſt, *John* vii. 17. *If any Man do my Will, he ſhall know my Doctrine, whether it be of God or not*, and that Men *err through not knowing the Scripture*, Matth. xxii. And yet believe all the while, that theſe ſacred Fountains of Light ſhould be ſhut up to keep Men from Errors; and that the ſole Right of underſtanding the ſame, belongs to a few, not to the Multitude; who yet can pretend no extraordinary Aſſiſtance or Revelation herein, nor will themſelves come to theſe Waters of Jealouſy to be tried

tried. 4. Where he muſt needs believe, that the Scriptures are the Oracles of God committed to the Church, to give Anſwer in every dark Caſe, *Rom.* iii. 2. The Type and Form of ſound Doctrine, *Rom.* vi. 17. Unto whoſe Sentence, in all Matters, both of Faith and Practice, we are expreſly referred, *Iſaiah* viii. 20. And yet believe alſo, that it hath no Authority or deciſive Voice; but what is precarious and dependent on the *Romiſh Church*, and thus conſent to have the whole Chriſtian Faith, viſibly unhinged of the Foundation of the Scripture; and ſubjected to a ſupreme, viſible, and pretended infallible Judge here in the Earth, with ſuch a Claim of Dominion over the Faith of the Saints, as the Apoſtles of Chriſt durſt never own, but did fully diſclaim, 2 *Cor.* i. 24. 5. Where he muſt believe, that Jeſus Chriſt came for this End to ſave loſt Man, and by one *Offering hath perfected for ever them that are ſanctified*, Heb. 10. 18. And yet join with the ſame, a Faith of a human Satisfaction for Sin, ſo as Men may both merit, mediate, and ſupererogate, go above what is needful for themſelves; and ſo be ſaved in the ſame Way of Life, which was by

the *Covenant of Works*; aſcribing no more to Chriſt, than the giving Salvation to Mens own Merits; which their own intrinſick Value and Condignity, doth require as a Debt. 6. He finds not how in the ſame Creed, he could poſſibly hold by one Mediator betwixt God and Man, where a Plurality for this End is admitted; and by the Reality of Chriſt's human Nature, and his having a true and finite Body, which is ſubjected to have a new created Being, each Time in the conſecrated Hoſt; or believe the Truth of his Sufferings, as now fully accompliſhed, and to be repeated no more, when it is in that daily Sacrifice of the Maſs ſtill offered, as a propitiatory Sacrifice for the Living and the Dead. So, on the moſt ſevere and impartial Enquiry, he cannot find, how one holding theſe Principles ſhould go a further Length than Morality; or claim another ſtanding than by a *Covenant of Works*, 7. Nor knows he how to believe at once the Truth of the Goſpel, to be a Doctrine of Holineſs and infinite Purity, and yet join in the ſame Faith, ſuch an Indulgence for Men to ſin, that Money may ſtand for Merit, and the Rich may have the moſt eaſy and large Entry

Entry into Heaven. Conceit that it is a Privilege for Men to deſtroy themſelves; and by external Severities and Penance to the Fleſh, like to the lancing and gaſhing of *Baal*'s Prieſts, ſupply the Room of Chriſtian Mortification. 8. Yea, he finds it not poſſible to believe, that Sin can only be expiated by the Blood of Chriſt; and is his alone Work, who hath purged our Sin himſelf, *Heb.* i. 3. Or, that there are more than two Ways that lead to a twofold State of Men; (a ſtrait Way, which leads to a Life, and a broad unto Deſtruction, *Matth.* vii. 14.) and yet believe, that there is a Purgatory after after this Life, wherein Men muſt be tormented and ſuffer extream Pains, to expiate ſuch venial Sins, as their Prayers and Penances here could not do; yea, he is made to wonder, how any who believes ſuch a Thing, can ever have true Peace or Comfort in the World; concluding, that Papiſts do either take it as a Fiction, or forget themſelves, when they are chearful. For the Fear of ſuch a Place, the Uncertainty of Releaſe, and how long a Term it may be ere this purging Work be compleat, when their own Writers aſſign no leſs Time than

ten thouſand Years, as needful to ſatisfy for ſome Sins, and fear leſt it prove a real Hell, muſt ſtill be a piercing Terror; nor can he believe, that ſuch ſhould credit themſelves herein, who aſſume this Power to change the Condition of the Dead. Since were it really believed, that the Keys of ſuch a Priſon were here in Mens Hands, and Folk could, by the largeſt Bribes to the *Romiſh Church*, get a ſafe Deliverance thence; it were not ſtrange to ſee the the *temporal State of Chriſtendom*, in a ſhort Time made over to theſe. We ſhould judge they were, in a ſtrange Manner, indeed, privileged above the whole Reſidue of Men, who by ſuch a Power over the World to come could make ſo eaſy a Purchaſe of this alſo which is preſent. 9. He finds, and is ſure, he could never get his Reaſon and Conſcience brought to ſuch a Faith, even tho' he made a feigned Profeſſion herein, of that pretended Supremacy of *Peter*, as Biſhop of *Rome*, on which the whole Frame and Structure of the *Papacy* leans, and the Virtue of all the Pardons and Abſolutions founded thereon; on which ſo many have adventured into another World;

World; except he would build on the Sand only, and not on the Rock. 10. He finds alſo how ſuch an Erection of the Goſpel Church in her Militant State here, as the *Papacy* in its complex Frameis, united in ſuch an Head, as the *Pope*, (who, as the ſole Vicegerent of Chriſt in the Earth, is at once inveſted with a civil Monarchy, and univerſal Empire over the Church, to impoſe and judge in the higheſt Tranſactions, which relate to the eternal State and immortal Souls of Men,) is a Thing, that as to Matter of Right, is as foreign to the Scripture, and inconſiſtent therewith, as *Mahumetaniſm* can be. And as to Matter of Fact, is a Truſt that no created Being could ever exerciſe. 11. He ſees, and is ſure, that he muſt either loſe Sight, both of the Rule and Spirit of the Goſpel, or have a juſt Abhorrence of that Way, wherein he ſhould be inevitably involved in a virtual Conſent, and Acceſſorineſs to all that Cruelty and Blood, which for ſo many Ages hath been ſhed therein; when 'tis ſo clear that this was no Exorbitance only of Practice; but a native Reſult of their Tenets and Principles, and not only diſpenced with, but counted an highly meritorious Service;

Service; yea, when it is ſure, that under no ſecular Government of the moſt tyrannical State that ever was in the World, hath ſuch arbitrary Violence and Oppreſſion been exerciſed. Or ſo much innocent Blood been ſhed, as by this Party. 12. And tho' his Judgment ſtood undetermined, and in an equal Balance upon this great Controverſy, he could not exerciſe Reaſon, and not ſee upon what Hand ſuch a Deciſion is, as was in *Solomon*'s Time of the true Mother of the Child; and who do moſt ruefully ſeek to intereſt themſelves in the imminent Hazard of the Chriſtian Faith, and who under the leaſt Influence of any temporal Motives, do this Day ſtand for the Truth and Subſtance of Chriſtianity, and plead that it be not deſtroyed in Envy and Hatred to them; or on what Side it is likely, that this Manner of Conqueſt is moſt followed to gain Men to the Profeſſion of the Truth, by a prevailing Evidence of their own Light and Judgment herein, and to require their exacteſt perſonal Trial and Enquiry about the ſame.

In the *third* Place, tho' he ſees there can be no Pretence of doctrinal Wavering about the Reformed Religion, and finds

finds it not eaſy to comprehend, how in one and the ſame Age, wherein the Truth hath ſo brightly ſhined, this Way of *Popery* ſhould have Prevalence, or gain Ground any more, by Seduction with Arguments to the Reaſon or Conſcience of any; yet, ſince it is an Hour of Temptation and of Fainting, above all that have been hitherto known, and Mens Eyes are arreſted with ſuch a Proſpect of the Times, as is like to ſtagger the Faith of the moſt eſtabliſhed; he is preſſed, (as counting it one of the higheſt Duties of this Day,) to know and ſearch out what may afford greateſt Aſſiſtance to his Faith, from the Diſpenſations of Providence therein, and to know the Evidence and Strength of ſuch Reflections, as theſe are for this End.

1. That 'tis ſure, as the ſmalleſt Things which the Lord does afford to ſtrengthen and ſupport againſt ſuch a Storm, ſhould be ſeriouſly improved and taken to Heart; ſo does it lay us in the Way of that Promiſe for having greater Things given to our Obſervation; yea, that now is the Time, when ſuch as have been moſt comforted by the Word of Promiſe, may be put to the ſoreſt Trial in their Faith of

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any, to keep off stumbling at the Work of Providence; and be thus tried according to the Measure of these Confirmations.

2. Tho' the Churches Declinings, under greatest Measures of Light, may be too visible, and that Religion gains not by Persecution as formerly, with such an amazing Change as is now in her external Condition, yet he sees it to be no strange Thing, when most signal Warnings have gone before of such a Trial, with too evident Dispositions towards the same, and Discovery of its Approach in all the Causes thereof; yea, might be foreseen by all, that the holy God would not still bear with an impure and unenlivened Profession of the pure and glorious Truth of Christianity, which hath now long been one of the most sad and mortal Signs in the public State of Religion; nor can it be found, that ever any Church did decline and fall from the Purity of the Truth and lose Ground herein by external Persecution, where a judicial Departure of its Life and Power did not remarkably go before; so as it is not of late, this hath been clearly presaged, that some dark and unusual Measure of Trial from Anti-

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chriſt, and the laſt Havock of the Reformed Churches was drawing near, which would be ſore ere it had done its Work.

3. He ſees alſo, how this preſent Hour is not more ſearching and dark, than it may be clear herewith. 1. That now, after the Iſſue of that Oppoſition, which was betwixt the Chriſtian Faith in the firſt Entry of the Goſpel, and that dying apoſtate Church of the *Jews*; and next, with the Pagan Empire, after that new Erection of the Goſpel Church among the *Gentiles*, which is now over; ſo is the greateſt Trial of the latter Days fixed on the Deciſion of that long depending Controverſy betwixt Chriſt and Antichriſt. 2. That, according to the Scripture, we muſt believe, that as after the Manner of *Egypt*, that glorious Triumph and Delivery of the Church from Antichriſt will be ſurely carried on; ſo the more near it comes to the laſt Aſſault; (and when this falls in to have its proper Room in the Frame and Adminiſtration of Providence;) the greater Extremity, Terror, and Darkneſs may be expected alſo, ſuch as hath not been in any former Time. Yea, with that united and formidable

midable Conjunction of Strength and growing Succeſs of this Adverſary for a Time, that the moſt eſtabliſhed Chriſtians may be in Hazard to ſtagger. 3. That, now is the Day, wherein the Lord will have Men know, what it is to have the Bible, as the alone Security of the Proteſtant Religion, on which they muſt entirely reſt, no leſs than as it is the ſole Rule and Standard thereof; which is a Trial worthy of all that Expence of the Pain, Anguiſh, and Wreſtlings, that can now poſſibly attend the ſame.

4. Whilſt the great Standard of Antichriſt's Kingdom is viſibly ſet up and brought to the open Field, as 'tis this Day in the Church of *France*, and all human Help taken out of Sight; yet does he ſee herewith. 1. How this now is concluded, as the moſt infallible Remedy to recover Popery. And that Argument, to which they truſt more than to *Peter's* Keys, to wit, theſe ſanguinary Laws by the Sword and Rack, which they have again betaken themſelves to, tho' ſuch an Argument the Scripture never knew, and ſober Heathens would abhor, and which gives up the Credit of all Religion to Atheiſm. 2. That there can be no more

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Evidence of a desperate and sinking Cause than is here, and nothing else can support it, but these Weapons which are not against the Conscience; or by any Terror of the second Death, but of the first. 3. That this is such an Argument, if they have not in a strange Manner forgot, which hath within these hundred Years been so fully answered, and by such an immediate Appearance of God in the Kingdom of *France*, that, according to these Measures of Cruelty against the Protestants there, so was it returned in a Deluge of their own Blood, yea, so both the public State of the Church, and Faith of the Saints, in the Truth was more deeply rooted; and tho' we yet see not the End of these Wonders, but the Dark-side only of the Dispensations of such a Day, yet do we know this sore Rod on the Church, is but as the Saw and Ax in the Carpenter's Hand, who shall never undo that glorious Work which Christ hath done, and is still further perfecting on the Ruins of Antichrist's Kingdom.

5. Tho' some unusual Deeps and Methods of Subtilty be now on Foot also against the Truth; yet he cannot but see,

how nothing could more effectually tend to confirm the Proteſtant Cauſe, and take the Credit of Popery off the Conſciences of thoſe in their own Profeſſion, who are conſiderate and in the leaſt ſerious herein; when the World muſt thus ſee. 1. How eaſy it is for ſuch to take any Meaſure and Latitude in the Doctrinals of their Profeſſion, when this can moſt ſerve the Juncture of ſuch a Time, and heighten or narrow the Controverſy betwixt them, and the Reformed Church at their Pleaſure; ſo as to ſacrifice the *Church of Rome* unto the Court of *Rome*, if no leſs can ſecure that End. 2. That the moſt horrid *Turkiſh* Slavery over Mens Bodies comes no ſuch Length, as that ſtrange Claim that theſe now make of an abſolute Empire over Mens Conſciences by the Sword; and to put them to ſuch a Tribute of their Obedience, that they ſhall then be ſecure, if they but come the Length to ſin againſt their Light, and adventure on ſo ſmall a Thing as to go to Hell, and periſh eternally ſince 'tis an external and feigned Profeſſion of ſuch a Way that they do thus force from thoſe, who they ſee cannot in Faith be perſuaded hereof. 3. Yea, ha

hath been too visible, how much that Master-plot and Engine, hath in these Times been working, to take Men first off from all Sense of Religion, and destroy them in the Morals of Christianity, to make this Conquest more easy, that such may have no inward Defence and Support against the Terror of human Violence. Yea, in this Way, when they have sought how to divide Protestants among themselves, and betwixt Rulers and them, this seems the last and greatest Engine of all, how to divide betwixt them and their God, acting the same Plot, which was laid betwixt *Balak* and *Balaam*, as knowing that 'tis no naked Shew or Profession of the Reformed Religion they need fear, so much as that old Protestant Spirit in the Power and Life thereof, before which their Interest could never stand; and dread nothing so much as the reviving hereof; which, as the Hand-writing upon the Wall, did ever more threaten the fatal Ruin of that Kingdom, than any human Power or Strength.

6. Here also he finds just Cause of Astonishment, how Kings, or great Men, in the Earth, should give their Power to

ſupport the *Romiſh* Intereſt, which hath been ſo viſibly deſtructive to theirs: When 'tis not poſſible to deny how its firſt Advance and Progreſs to that ſupream Height, which it once attained; and the declining of the civil Empire, did by the ſame Steps go together; until Magiſtracy was turned unto a dead Image and Shadow, except its being enlivened by their Breath and Authority, as it was during the whole Height of that Antichriſtian Power. Nor will it be denied, that, in theſe late Times, the *French* Monarchy was never more near its Diſſolution in its right Line than by the *Catholick* League there; and it would ſeem not eaſy to be forgot, how *Henry* the Third, who had moſt ſought to cruſh the Proteſtants in purſuance of that League, was at laſt conſtrained to flee to ſuch for Help; or by whom he was killed; and that heroick Prince *Henry* the Fourth, who was firſt ſtabbed in the Mouth and then in the Heart; yea, that the public Records of that Nation cannot poſſibly deny, but the Houſe of *Bourbon*, owes its Power and Preſervation, more to the Proteſtants, (without whom it had been fully extinct,) than

than *Ahaſhuerus* did to *Mordecai* the *Jew*, for what he found written in the Chronicles of *Perſia*, when the Decree was then paſt to deſtroy all the Seed of the *Jews*.

7. As in no Times paſt was ever a greater Expectation than is now, which Way the Scale will turn, and what will be the End of theſe Wonders, when the neareſt Events of Providence are ſo dark and amazing; ſo does he find this, in ſome extraordinary Way called for, to be ſtill, and ſee what God will do for his Church, and with humble Confidence, look for ſome ſuch Diſpenſation, as hath not hitherto been in this extream Exigence. And tho' he do not appear in that Way and Manner as in former Times, that it ſhall be in a Way more ſignally glorious, beyond what hath formerly been; yea, he does in Faith thus judge, that then is the Church's Day broke, and hath found the ſure Way of her Strength, and right Line of Duty; when her Hope and Confidence is taken off from all viſible Refuges, and entirely ſettled on her inviſible Head, and his Promiſe put to ſuit by Prayer without faint-

ing herein. It is ſure, the Truth and Faithfulneſs of God, ſtands engaged for Antichriſt's Fall, as well as for Salvation by Chriſt, and ſince he hath ſaid, this Adverſary ſhall be broke and brought down, it muſt ſurely be, tho' the Duſt of the Ground ſhould riſe for this End, and now is the Faith of the Saints called for becoming the Greatneſs of ſuch an Aſſurance, on which are the Eyes of Men, of their own Conſciences, of the elect Angels, yea, of the glorious God, to ſee who does indeed credit him in this Day, when there is no ſenſible Support herein; and tho' it now threatens ſorely the Departure of many from the Faith, who had ſome viſible Profeſſion thereof, yet may it be hoped for, that the Turn of the next Tide ſhall bring in more, with a ſolid and true Increaſe to the Church, than theſe ſad Days do now take off.

Character VI.

It is thus a confirmed Chriſtian ſhould be ſpecially conſidered, as one, who is not only at Reſt on the known Certainty of his Faith, but is ready to render ſome Account

Account of the ſolid rational Grounds and Demonſtrations hereof, unto all who aſk after the ſame, and doth thus judge, B

1. That theſe are the proper and appointed Means, which the Lord hath afforded for the greateſt Confirmation of Mens Faith within Time; yea, preferable to any external Miracles, which are more extraordinary and remote Aſſiſtances thereto. 2. That theſe are given as ſuch a great Help to his Joy, and Excitement of his Affections to follow the Lord fully, as may make him wonder how the Greatneſs of theſe Things, (which Men are called to believe,) can come near their Thoughts, and yet no more take them up about this confirming Work. 3. That the too viſible Neglect hereof, both with reſpect to the Youth, and Community of Profeſſors in the Church, ſeems one of the ſad and fundamental Defects of this Day. The Reaſons hereof, with ſome clear View of theſe Means, which might moſt anſwer ſuch an End, are briefly offered in this preceding Work.

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Character VII.

A truly confirmed Chriſtian, may in the laſt Place be herein alſo conſidered, as ſuch, whoſe Faith being oft tried thro' all theſe Stages of Chriſtianity he hath been taken; hath ſome proper Record of the moſt choice and ſignal Confirmations of his Life, to improve the ſame, not only for his own Support in that laſt Warfare of Death, but for ſtrengthning the Faith of others; wherein he does thus judge,

1. That there could be no true Support or Relief from Religion here in the Earth, if it cannot bear out then. And that Death is the great Touchſtone and Trial, when the true Value and Difference betwixt Things of an eternal Truth and Subſtance, and the Things of this World will be beſt ſeen. 2. He reckons each real Chriſtian, by his Profeſſion then engaged and accountable, even by ſome explicite perſonal Teſtimony, to put to his Seal that God is true, and bear the ſame Witneſs, with his laſt and dying Breath to the Truth of Chriſtianity, which

which he gave in the whole Courſe of his Life; and of that Joy, Complacence and Aſſurance of Mind, which he hath found, and now hath in the Way of Truth: So as to preſs the ſame on his deareſt Relations, as their alone true Intereſt. 3. He ſees alſo, how honourable it is for the Lord, that ſuch, whoſe Faith hath been oft tried, (and when thus with Joy and Admiration, he can look back on the moſt preſſing and conſpicuous Conflicts of Time,) ſhould have it their laſt Work to pay in ſome Tribute of Praiſe unto him, whoſe Word and Promiſe unto them, did yet never fail. 4. He accounts the more weighty Trials he hath been carried thro' in his Chriſtian Warfare, do both add more to this Service, and impart more to the Value of ſuch a Teſtimony, 5. He judgeth this one ſpecial Way and Advantage, whereby one Generation might declare the Truth and Faithfulneſs of God unto another, in a Family-Line and Relation, to ſhew forth thus, that the Lord is upright; that he is their Rock, and with him is no Unrighteouſneſs. Yea, which ſhould be Matter of unſpeakable Joy, when now

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in his Turn, he can ſay, that ſuch hath the Lord been to him; what were *David*'s dying Words, 1 *Kings* i. 14. *Who hath delivered my Soul out of all Diſtreſs*, how that in no Trouble, or Exigence of his Life, he was ever left without a Door of Hope, and thus alſo with *Caleb*, *Joſhua* xiv. 10. To give in ſome ſuch Witneſs for God, "I am now near the Cloſe of Time, "and do teſtify, that the Word of his "Truth and Promiſe, he hath ſurely "accompliſhed; which hath brought me "ſafe and honourably through, when ſuch "as did diſtruſt the ſame by Misbelief, "and ſought after another Refuge, found "all their Confidences fail." 6. And knowing likewiſe how great a Surprizal Death may be; and that ſuch as have ſhined in their Day, may yet ſet under a Cloud, and go ſilent off the Stage; he judgeth it the more needful to have ſuch a Piece of his dying Work prepared, as one of the choiceſt Legacies he can bequeath to his ſurviving Friends, in a Seaſon, when it hath uſually the greateſt Advantage of Weight and Acceptance; it being ſtill qualified with Chriſtian Prudence and humble Sobriety; ſo as all

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may ſee its whole Intent is to commend to Mens Conſcience the Way of Truth and Godlineſs, and not themſelves, and thus direct it for the proper Uſe and Improvement of their neareſt Relations. I know it may be ſtrange to ſome, what is ſpoke upon this Head; but as 'tis ſure the preſent Day hath its Duty, and each Time of our Life hath ſome proper Work, ſo I humbly judge, that this ſeems to fall in, as the laſt Service of a dying Chriſtian to his Generation, to deliver off his Hand the Truth which he had received and hath oft proved, with his confirmatory Seal and Teſtimony thereto. And now is it in ſome more than ordinary Way called for in this Hour of great Darkneſs, when, if the Security of the abſolute Promiſes ſtood not good to the Church, we might fear Religion might quickly wear out, and Truth periſh from the Earth; and as ſo ſolemn and weighty a Thing ſhould it be managed with much humble Prudence, ſo that it may be judged, that there is no ſerious and obſerving Chriſtian, but hath ſome peculiar Engagements, under which they find themſelves held even beyond others,

yea,

yea, ſome ſuch ſingular Confirmations in the Journal of their Life, that ſhould not be eaſy to hide under the Ground; where the ſtrengthening of others hereby is concerned; and that ſuch ſhould not then leave the Croſs of Jeſus Chriſt at a Loſs, or part therewith without their Teſtimony, which hath left them at ſo great an Advantage. And tho' this is not to offer particular Rules in ſuch a Duty, but that Chriſtian Wiſdom muſt direct herein, as the preſent Caſe is circumſtantiated, yet might it be hoped, were this more taken to Heart, it ſhould be a ſingular Means to make more deep Impreſſions of Mens dying Work on their Spirits. Even whilſt they are in Health, to excite their ſurviving Friends, and to keep Religion thus alive in a Family State and Relation, and gain a more venerable Reſpect to the ſame on Mens Conſciences; yea, to fix alſo ſtronger Engagements on the ſucceeding Offſpring.

Thus is preſented here, a ſhort Idea of the ſolid and judicious Work of Chriſtian Confirmation in the Truth under theſe foregoing Characters, to

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ſhew, how rare an Attainment of Religion this is, yea, to preſent herein a ſpecial Series and Scale of the greateſt Steps in this confirmatory Work, by which it ſhould be followed. And none of theſe may be parted from other, tho' ſome be of an higher and more abſolute Uſe for ſuch an End. And if it ſhould be objected here, What needs any ſuch Expence of Time, or Pains in this Caſe, when 'tis ſure the eſſential Truths of the Goſpel are not queſtioned, and that without internal Evidence of the Spirit, no external Means of this Kind can be of Uſe. I know that 'tis the alone Work of the Holy Ghoſt, to beget a divine and ſupernatural Faith; without which the ſurtheſt Light and objective Evidence, tho' backed with a continued Diſpenſation of external Miracles, could never bear Chriſtians out, either as to Duty or Comfort, in their Paſſage thorow Time; yea, nothing is in the leaſt here to ſubject the Credit of our Faith to Mens rational Comprehenſi- but rather tends to enervate whol- the Strength of any ſuch Tenet,

and take off all Pretence for the ſame: But 'tis ſure alſo, I muſt quit all ſolid Security in the Way of Religion, and any clear Founding in the Light and Certainty of the Scripture, or admit theſe Things as undeniable.

1. That ſupernatural Faith is the moſt highly rational Light that's within Time. And that none, who profeſs the Name of Chriſt, can be of ſo low a Size, as ſhould not be preſſed and excited to be much about this Groundwork of knowing the Truth and Principles of their Profeſſion upon its own Evidence; yea, are thus called, *as new born Babes to drink in the ſincere Milk of the Word*, 1 Pet. ii. Which, as 'tis clearly in the Original, is the *rational Milk of the Word*, to be thus received, no leſs on Conviction and Certainty of the Judgment, than with the outgoing of their Affections.

2. That as 'tis not conceiveable, how a true and firm Aſſent can be to divine Truth, but on its known Certainty, ſo here is no reſolving of the Chriſtian's Faith on the ſtrongeſt tional Evidences hereof, which m

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ſtill be reſolved on the Teſtimony of God, made clear and evident to them to be ſuch.

3. It is ſure alſo, the Lord hath not given ſo large a Meaſure of theſe Grounds and Demonſtrations of his Truth, with ſuch redoubled Arguments of that Kind, to be of ſo ſmall Regard as is with moſt. But for ſome great and univerſal Uſe hereof to the whole Church, and knew how needful ſuch Aſſiſtances to the Faith of his People would be whilſt they are on the Earth.

4. That theſe Means, which tend moſt convincingly to found a rational Aſſurance in the Judgment, are the proper Vehicle of the Spirit of God, by which his ſealing Work ſhould be both ſought and expected; nor can I judge how the Credit and Uſe hereof ſhould be ſo ſmall, and not on the ſame Ground quit any external Ordinance of the Goſpel; which without the Spirit of the Lord can never profit, nor how we ſhould expect and ſuit his confirming Work on the Soul, when theſe greateſt confirming Means, which

he hath given to the Church, have no juſt Weight: But, oh! how wonderful a Teacher is the Holy Ghoſt, when ſuch ordinary Means fail, and are inacceſſible, by furniſhing his People then with theſe ſtrongeſt Arguments of Love and Power, who having had but ſmall Meaſures of Light, yet were not unfaithful to improve the ſmalleſt Degree of ſuch a Talent?

5. Yea, ſo great a Thing is it, to attain a ſolid Faith of Things wholly remote from our Senſe, and ſo far above the Reach and Apprehenſion of Nature, or to have an abſolute Reliance on an inviſible Refuge for our preſent and eternal State, as no common Aſſent can anſwer, when the very Reſt and quiet of the Soul, muſt needs lie in the ſure and firm Perſwaſion hereof.

6. It is too viſible alſo, how little the practical Uſe of ſuch a Mean hath yet been eſſayed in the Church, that all who are Members thereof, might no leſs know the Strength and Firmneſs of the Foundations of their Faith, by its own Evidence, than the general Articles of

of Religion. The moſt uſual inſtructing Work lies almoſt wholly about the noetic Part of Divinity, there ſeems not that ſerious Regard to preſs the dianoetic Part hereof on Mens Conſcience, as if this were to be reſtrained to a few, who are more knowing, learned, and of an inquiſitive Spirit about the rational Certainty of the Truth, and for whom theſe choice and abundant Helps of this Kind, which are in this Age, ſeem more peculiarly directed. 'Tis ſure, that the Chriſtian Faith in the firſt Times did remarkably then ſpread and prevail, by theſe clear Evidences hereof to the Judgment, made effectual by the Spirit of God, more than by extraordinary Miracles. Nor knew they otherwiſe what it was to be Chriſtians, but by embracing the Truth, with a full Aſſurance of Underſtanding, no leſs than of Delight and Affection. But if it be objected, it is not the Caſe now, where Religion is planted in a Nation, and hath an uncontroulable public Profeſſion under the Support of human Laws; I know no admitted Weight this can have, except

that it ſhould be granted, that Chriſtians now be born, and not new created.

7. Yea, is it not ſure, tho' it ſeem little underſtood, that the primary Grounds and Evidences of our Faith, are not only as to their End, demonſtrative of the Truth and Divinity of the Scripture, but are upon the Matter, ſuch Demonſtrations alſo, which moſt natively reſult from the ſame by infallible Conſequence; and are thus to be accounted, not as humane but divine Arguments, given us by the Spirit of God.

8. I ſhall but further add, how ſuch as do ſeriouſly ponder Things, will find this Demonſtration to be no more important than clear, that to be a confirmed Chriſtian, and a confirmed Proteſtant are convertible Terms; and that if they that are under that deplorable Bondage and Darkneſs of Popery, were but once awakened to ſee the Truth and Certainty of the Chriſtian Faith, by its intrinſick and objective Evidence, and taken off that brutiſh Credulity and Dependence on the alone

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Credit of others herein, it might be ſaid the ſtrongeſt Engine to hold up that Profeſſion were then broke, and we ſhould ſee the Doctrine and Rule of Faith, to be of ſuch full and perſpicuous Evidence from the Scripture, as without Blaſphemy, they could not ſeek from the Lord to give them a plainer Rule, than what he hath there given.

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CHANGES AND TROUBLES.

PEace, way-ward Soul! let not those various Storms,
Which hourly fill the World with fresh Alarms,
Invade thy Peace; nor discompose that Rest,
Which thou may'st keep untouch'd within thy Breast.
Amidst those Whirlwinds, if thou keep but free
The Intercourse betwixt thy God and thee;
Thy Region lies above these Storms; and know,
Thy Thoughts are earthly, and they creep too low,
If these can reach thee, or Access can find,
To bring or raise like Tempests in thy Mind.
But yet in these Disorders something lies,
That's worth thy Notice, out of which the wise
May trace and find that just and powerful Hand,
That secretly but surely doth command,
And manage these Distempers with that Skill,

That

That while they seem to cross, they act his Will.
Observe that silver Thread, that steers and bends
The worst of all Disorders, to such Ends,
That speak his Justice, Goodness, Providence,
Who closely guides it by his Influence.
And though these Storms are loud, yet listen well,
There is another Message that they tell:
This World is not thy Country; 'tis thy way;
Too much Contentment would invite thy stay
Too long upon thy Journey; make it strange,
Unwelcome News, to think upon a Change:
Whereas these rugged Entertainments send
Thy Thoughts before thee to thy Journey's End;
Guide thy Desires all homewards; tell thee plain,
To think of resting here is but in vain;
Make thee to set an equal Estimate
On this uncertain World, and a just Rate
On that to come; they bid thee wait and stay
Until thy Master's Call, and then with Joy
To entertain it. Such a Change as this,
Renders thy Loss, thy Gain; improves thy Bliss.

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